

"Called To Comfort"

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[0 : 00] To the Church of God, which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in Achaia, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also our consolation abounds through Christ. Please pray with me to prepare our hearts for the study of His Word.

God, our Father, we have come to You, a very group of many different people, who have lived many different lives.

And we come to Your Word today with different troubles and joys. But we gather here because Your Word is life-giving. So we pray that through the preached Word today, You would make us more like Your Son, that You would teach us more deeply who You are, and that You would comfort us in every trouble for Your glory.

[1 : 29] Amen. I do not need to tell you that life is often hard, that we go through many difficulties.

Job says, Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. We may lose our jobs, lose loved ones, lose love.

We may be lonely or misunderstood. We may have health issues. And we will often find ourselves, even after our best efforts, failing.

Sometimes, it's two in the morning, you're walking out of your room, and you stub your toe in the dark, and it really hurts.

Life is full of suffering. I digress. Stub toes aside, life can be deeply distressing at times. For some of us, there will even be times where it feels like all our life is, is trouble.

[2 : 31] Personally, even after I was saved, I struggled for a long time with depression. I also found that my family rejected me from my faith. They treated me very poorly because of it.

And I often felt alone, even when I was in the company of others. But if you're here today, and your heart is troubled, I want to encourage you to know that the Word of God has answers for our trouble, and responses to our distress.

This text that we are in today is here to call you to the comfort of God. If you are a believer, it is here to call you once again to the comfort that you have enjoyed in the past.

And if you are not a believer, it is here to call you to learn for the first time the true comfort that this God offers. This is going to be the main idea of today's message.

I want you to lock it into your heads that we are called to comfort. This is the answer to life's troubles, is the comfort of God.

[3 : 43] We are called both to receive God's comfort from His truth, and then we are called to comfort others with that comfort. Use this idea, our calling to comfort, to hold this truth of Scripture in your head through the rest of the week that it might encourage you to live more thoroughly after Christ.

We're going to work through three points to break down this text to help us understand how God calls us to comfort. Point number one is the God of all comfort.

Point number two is about suffering and comfort. And point number three is our calling to comfort others.

Point one, the God of all comfort. 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, in all our tribulation.

The first thing we must remember as we approach this text is that there is no God like this God. There is no God like this God in all the religions of the world.

[5 : 11] No one compares to this Father. Like Paul, we should praise God when we consider His goodness and kindness.

As Paul prays, blessed be, highly praised should this God be. Paul praises Him as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

Here God is being given a title that highlights His kindness, His goodness, His compassion to those who are in difficulties.

I can't help when reading this, but remember how God proclaimed His name before Moses in Exodus 34. When Moses asks to see the glory of God, God says He will proclaim His name before Him and He proclaims this, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, in abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

This is how God chooses to title Himself a Father of mercies, a God of all comfort because this is how He wants His people to think of Him.

[6 : 41] He wants us to think of Him as this God of comfort so that when we enter distress, He is the one we run to. In His choice to title Himself this way, He wants you to fix in your mind that the place to run in your distress is not to the false comforts of this world, but to the comforts of the God of all mercy.

Meditate on God's goodness and it will call you to seek Him even in the midst of your deepest distress. It will be a comfort, a safeguard to you.

Just as the psalmist prays in Psalm 18, The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

So consider, do you think of God this way? When you consider the Creator of the world, do you consider that He is a God of mercies and the Father of all good things?

Perhaps you are tempted to search for comfort in things other than the God of all comfort. Perhaps you look to your own strength that by your own efforts you can secure peace.

[8 : 17] Or maybe it's financial security. If I just have enough money, then my troubles will go away. Or maybe, like some people in the world, you go to a substance and you seek that substance for comfort.

Or commonly, many of us will seek to entertainment and look to find escape from the troubles of our life. But know that these things are false comforts.

They will leave you in greater trouble than they found you. And you will find over and over that these comforts are not capable of satisfying your sorrows like the comforts of the Father of mercy and the God of all comfort.

Every time this world fails you, it is God calling you to His comfort. It is God showing you by the limitations of this world to trust in the unlimited God.

Notice also in this text that God is called the Father of the Lord Jesus and also the Father of all mercies. Paul is using this poetic parallel to combine these ideas together.

[9 : 44] It is the point that every mercy and comfort that God offers us is offered through His Son Jesus, is secured through Jesus Christ.

There is no true comfort save the comfort that is found in the Gospel the good news of Christ. Even if you were to gain every luxury in the world, you will find it small comfort in eternity.

As Christ Himself says, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? The truest comfort is the Gospel.

The truest comfort is for us to realize the holiness of God, our sinfulness before Him and the atoning work of Christ on the cross that brings us near to Him by faith.

The truest comfort is to realize that you do not need to be perfect, that there is no longer a standard that you must pass muster to draw near to God, but rather that through faith God allows you to draw near to Him.

[11 : 03] the chief, the greatest, the truest comfort to be found is in Christ having a righteousness that is not our own and a love that we could never merit.

Each and every one of us is called to repent and receive this comfort. He is the God of all comfort and all you need to do is stop busying your heart with the false comforts that are pale shadows of the God of all comfort.

Point two, suffering and comfort. The Bible teaches us that those who are called to God's comfort are also called to suffering.

notice what is written here as Paul writes God comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble and even more clearly in verse five for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us so also our consolation abounds through Christ.

Jesus teaches us if any would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

[12 : 35] This is a message that the Christian path is a path that must be walked through difficulties as Christ walked through the difficulties of his life and all the way to the cross so too we must follow in his footsteps.

do not believe false teachers out there who preach that being a Christian is about having your best life now or that if you just believe hard enough God will make everything in your life great.

Do not be deceived by the devil into thinking that the best things that God has to offer is comfort and ease right now. none of us want suffering but if you follow Christ's path you will encounter it.

Jesus warns a servant is not greater than his master nor a messenger greater than the one who sends him. If they persecuted me so also they will persecute you.

Consider Paul's example that he highlights in verse five that the sufferings of Christ abound in him. Paul as an apostle a messenger of Christ faced persecution hunger exhaustion abandonment betrayal abuse false accusations and more.

[14 : 05] His path was filled with these things so much so that he says the sufferings of Christ abound in his life. If this is the case if the path of Christ means suffering why sacrifice the comforts that we have for this path?

Why take up a cross? Why not live in luxury? And how is God a God of all comfort if he calls us to suffering like this?

the answers to these questions must be found by faith. As Paul encourages do not look to that which is seen but look to that which is unseen for the things that are seen are perishing they are dying they are fading away but the things that are unseen are eternal.

the promises of God that we stake our hope in that we endure through sufferings because of are not seen by earthly eyes but they are seen by the eyes of faith as we see the promises of God and believe his words.

We are not to make our decisions by what they can offer us in this life. we are not to decide how to live our life based on what the most easy path now is.

[15 : 44] And if you do so, if you live based on the now, what little comforts you gain will one day yield to an eternity of suffering.

But if you decide to trust God's word, if you decide to accept a path that includes sufferings now, one day by the grace of God, you will enter an eternal kingdom with the blessed comfort of God himself.

Revelations 21, 3, and 4 proclaims to us this great end of the world reality that we will dwell with God. Listen to what it says.

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

[16 : 59] the reason that anyone would choose to take up their cross is to be found in that city with a Savior as their great comforter.

We are called to this comfort, this ultimate comfort, not the fleeting comforts of this world. He will wipe away every tear, and sorrow itself will pass away from us.

by faith we believe this, and by faith we are comforted even now knowing that one day every trouble will pass away to eternal glory.

It is so worth it, and we are comforted to know Christ will bring us to his glory. This is ultimately the pattern that is played out over and over through scripture, and fulfilled most greatly in the life of Christ, that sufferings persist first, and then glory comes later.

So just as Paul says, might the sufferings of Christ abound now in our life, so that to an even greater degree, our consolation, our reward, will abound in Christ.

[18 : 20] Just as Christ suffered and entered his glory, so too we know that we are called to comfort, and that call starts with suffering.

Be comforted by the words of Christ. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world.

The resurrection of Christ proves that not even death can separate us from the love of God. We will one day enter that eternal comfort. Point number three, we are called to comfort others.

All you have to do is look around to the world, and you will see affliction. Sorrow mounts up in the lives of so many, and having considered the mercy and comfort of our God, and how the present life is characterized by suffering, we must consider that when God calls us to his comfort, he calls us to share that comfort with others.

There is only one right response to coming to know the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that response is to go out and proclaim that same Father of comforts to others.

[19 : 50] God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble.

The obvious command that flows out of receiving God's comfort is to go out and offer that comfort to others.

we are to be imitators of the love of God that we have received. This love, this comfort is our motivation and it is the method by which we comfort others.

It is our motivation as Paul writes so that we should want to be like our Father. as we experience his love we should admire him and want to reflect him to each other and to the world.

In gratitude for the love we have received we must desire to share that same love with others. And as we look at the suffering in the world and as it becomes clear that no comfort in this world satisfies like our Father does we should long for opportunities to tell the world of better comforts of things that are greater than the things this life has to offer.

[21 : 22] Furthermore the comfort we receive from God is also the method that we are to use to comfort others. Do not reinvent the wheel.

God has shown us what real comfort looks like. It looks like the gospel of his son Jesus Christ. There are many good things that we should do for people to help them and to comfort them.

Christ addressed many present sufferings but he did all of those things to point them to his ability to address eternal suffering.

John Piper puts it this way, Christians should care about all suffering and especially eternal suffering. So watch people's kids cook a meal for someone, help people with bills, take people into your home, do many good things to love people, but know that all these things pale in comparison to the comfort and mercy of God.

To God who can overturn every sorrow and who has given his son that we may have life everlasting. So first and foremost, when you answer the call to comfort people, seek for opportunities to bring the comfort of the gospel of Christ.

[22 : 50] Then secondly, consider these other ways that God comforts us and how we can mimic them to comfort others with the comfort with which we have been comforted.

Here are five ways that God comforts us that we can mimic to comfort others. First of all, God speaks life-giving truth.

God has written his word to us and it puts every trouble and distress into a perspective that comforts us and encourages us in the midst of it.

So, when we are called to comfort others, we should seek for opportunities to bring the greater perspective, the greater truth of the Bible to bear, to relativize, to limit those comforts and to limit those sufferings and point to the greater comfort.

Speak life-giving truth to others who are in trials. Proverbs 15, 23 says, how sweet is a word that is spoken in good time.

[24 : 09] The second way that God comforts us, he listens. Stop and appreciate this truth. God listens to us.

He has called us to pray to him so that he might hear the burdens of our heart. We ought to stop and listen to the burdens of others' hearts so that we may comfort them by doing so.

Sometimes you need to stop speaking and start listening. Stop trying to search for a solution right away to other people's problems, but listen first.

as God has lovingly comforted us by making a way for us to voice our troubles before his throne.

The third way is by suffering and through sacrifice. Christ died for us to secure our eternal comfort. So we ought to lose sleep, to miss meals, to forfeit our rights, to sacrifice our desires, to serve and even suffer, to bring people ease from suffering both physical and spiritual.

[25 : 33] Philippians 2 highlights this great pattern of how we should comfort others and how Christ is the example of suffering for the sake of others.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but to the interests of others and have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ.

Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself and took the form of a servant. know that you are called to comfort others and one of the ways we do that is by suffering like our Savior suffered for us.

Number four, love generously. Give, give, give your time, your money, your energy for the sake of others and for their good.

call people to encourage them, pray for others late at night and early in the morning rise up to work for the good of others.

[26 : 57] Do, do abundant things, be charitable and gracious in your heart to do good for others and thereby bring them comfort like God has brought you.

And finally, comfort others by forgiving. by overlooking sin and passing over trespass. Ephesians 4.32 says, forgive one another as God in Christ forgave you.

When was the last time that you were pleased to forgive the sin of someone else and be reconciled with them? even at a loss to yourself, just like Christ forgave us at the loss of his own life.

Consider the burden of guilt we had against Christ and the comfort we experienced when it was all washed away. Go and do likewise.

God of God of all comfort. And when we are called to that comfort, we know we must walk through suffering by faith and we must use that comfort to comfort others.

[28 : 17] And we are to bring not our own comfort, but the eternal, perfect comfort of God in the gospel to each other and to the world, that they might repent and believe.

May we be imitators of God, having loved his blessings and loved him who blesses us. Please pray with me.

Lord, we are powerless to fulfill these laws on our own, and so we call on your Holy Spirit to reveal your truth to us and to conform us to the image of your Son.

We thank you for your word which is life-giving and powerful. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.