

The God of All Comfort

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 March 2020

Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 0 0] Now, we're going to read, we're going to read in the Bible, we're going to read in 2 Corinthians chapter 1. Amazingly, this morning, I get Bible passages in my email, and this was the passage actually this morning that came in to my email, and it's no coincidence. So let's read from 2 Corinthians chapter 1. We're going to read the first seven verses.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of 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 affliction, so that we 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're 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 also will share in our comfort. And it's particularly the words of verses 3 and 4 that I want to draw your attention to this morning. Let's read verses 3 and 4 again, where Paul says, 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.

You know, the world that we're living in, the world is responding to the crisis that's facing it with a mixture of terror and fear and even burying of our heads in the sand.

I mean, we've seen it around, haven't we, the episodes of panic buying in our supermarkets. It's testimony to the fear that so many people have that they can't control what's happening.

[3 : 0 0] So better make sure that we look after ourselves irrespective of other people's real needs. And then there's the attitude that says that the world itself can't give comfort to the world, the attitude that says the world itself actually believes that it can give comfort to the sick and to the fearful. The other day, the BBC ran a headline that stated that it would, that itself, that it would bring the nation together with all its TV programmes. And when you looked at the programmes, you realise quite honestly, they probably serve more to tear a nation apart than to bring any kind of national unity. But we have to remember, you have to remember as I have to remember, that as God commands us, that we cast all our anxieties on him. He is our burden bearer.

He is the one to whom we call upon in these times of fear and uncertainty. And God asks us, God tells us, God instructs us, yes, the Father cares upon him, to rest securely in God, as Paul tells us here in the passage, to rest secure in the God of all comfort. And in this time of worship this morning, it's the comfort that God gives us that we're going to consider, as we might say that we worship him from the comfort of our own homes. Several things to look at in this passage. And the first thing to see is the comfort that God gives us, the blessing that we have in God. Paul gives the greeting, this formal greeting, but it's more than, of course, than just a formal set of words, when he says, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You see how Paul directs us to the blessings that Christians have in God. And he's conveying this greeting of grace and peace and notice from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, it's Paul's great desire for his readers there in Corinth and, of course, beyond Corinth. This is the word of God. So, you know,

Paul's desire for all who read these words, that you know, that I know, that we know the abundance of God's unmerited favor, that we know God's grace. And in knowing that grace, Paul's saying that you'll know also the peace of God that comes from our Heavenly Father and that peace that comes from having that relationship through faith, faith in God, in the Lord Jesus. And it's that great comfort

that the Christian knows when he's in whatever situation, whatever circumstances, when by God's providence, you know that what is happening is in his perfect will. And so we have that assurance that God's grace remains with a Christian, with a believer who knows that peace, who has that peace that that God will never, ever take from you. And it's that grace and peace that the Christian has because of God's love in Christ. It's that love that gives you that sure comfort, that blessing that we might say and can say is God's antidote to the panic and unease in our souls. As we've said, we've all seen the evidence of panic all around, the panic that comes from fear, the fear of the unknown, the hysteria that really lacks self-control. But for the Christian, there's that great comfort, that great strength that in whatever circumstance you find yourself in, that as Paul said elsewhere, that you know contentment.

It's that contentment. It's that contentment that comes from the grace and peace that God blesses his children with and blesses in all circumstances. Paul wrote in Philippians 4 that whether he was well fed or hungry, whether he was living in plenty or in want, he was content. I'm asking you this question this morning. Through all these trying and testing days of this virus that seems to know no boundaries, that virus, that epidemic, this pandemic that's impacted practically every nation on earth, it's brought low tens of thousands of people. Can you truly say that I trust in the Lord who's blessed me with his grace and his peace? Now, of course, we do take every precaution and the wisdom that God gives us to be kept from the consequences of this virus that's with us. Of course, we exercise wisdom in every aspect of our lives in relation to our safety and, of course, the safety of others. We know ultimately, as we've been saying, that our safety is in the Lord. Our eternal safety is in him.

He is the God of our Father. He's God our Father, the Father whom we worship, whom we pray to, whom we adore. He is the one whom we call upon through the Lord Jesus. And I pray that you will know and are knowing his grace and peace by the enabling of the Holy Spirit who leads you to the Savior. So the blessing that we have in God who blesses us with his grace and his peace. But secondly, the comfort that we have in God, as Paul tells us there in verse 3, when he blesses God, he refers to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. And if you notice in the passage that we read with verse 2 and verse 3, you know, in the space of a couple of verses, Paul's referred to God as Father three times, once in verse 2 and a couple of times in verse 3. And what a comfort to know that God, the Father, is our Father. And when we know of God as our Father, then we know of him as giving to us that fatherly love, that love towards his children. We spoke about this a little on Wednesday night in our midweek meeting, we were looking at the first line of the Lord's Prayer, our Father in heaven.

[10:08] Well, here's Paul emphasizing the Father's love, God the Father's love for his church. And when we think of what that love involved, that God should call those who are his, his children, then surely we stagger in wonder. You know, the grace of God that called all for whom Christ gave his life, that grace that's brought you who are his into his family, that grace that adopted you into the family of grace, that grace that adopted you, that put his name upon you, that placed you and places you and continues to place you under his fatherly care. And that blessing, that blessing and calling upon God as Father, that blessing is yours as it is for every other believer in the Lord Jesus. And surely as we dwell in these truths, that that must, it has to bring great comfort to you, even at this time, and not of course only this time, but at all times. You know, we say it so often, but we do have to put this into practice. I mean, doctrine, true biblical doctrine is absolutely essential as that basis for sound trust and faith in God in every circumstance. And this doctrine we've been talking about, the doctrine of adoption, gives you that sure, that sure comfort in the knowledge that God cares for you in every circumstance. This is God the Father, God the Father who sent his one and only son for you so that you might become sons of God. And that, again, that truth surely should bring great comfort at this time when all around there's so much uncertainty, so much panic, so much confusion.

But you who dare to call God Father, you've got that assurance, that comfort to know there's no panic when faith when faith triumphs over fear. As Paul said in another letter in Romans, Romans chapter 8, verse 32, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. It's during these times that we're living through that, you know, we have to be constantly reminded that first and foremost, it's in God and to God that we find our true comfort, our true strength to persevere in these difficult days. And we thank God that he's given

us the wonders of medicine, the blessing of medicinal care from those who administer it. We have the blessing of our family, we've got the blessing of neighbours, we have the blessing of friends, we have the blessing even in a time such as this, when we gather in our different homes to call upon God, even in worship this morning. And we do give him praise thanks to God that he's given to the people who are in the people who are in the people who are in the person who are in Christ. You know that there's a greater comfort beyond the physical. There's that comfort in the Lord. He's showered upon us, mercy upon mercy. He's blessed you with a comfort that enables you to rest in him and to know that peace that passes understanding. And these mercies that bring comfort to so many, well, they're mercies. You see that in the passage, it's the plural, mercies. And then we ask, maybe delve a little deeper into what Paul is saying here. What are these mercies? Well, let's look at two. Let's look at two of the mercies that God gives us. And surely the first, of course, is himself, the mercy of God and giving to us himself, but his word, the Bible. You know, in many ways, the coronavirus epidemic, you know, with all its constrictions and restrictions, it's actually been a blessing to the Christian. Because surely, and I pray that you'll find this in your own experience, there's not been the same tendency even to, or temptation to, to lean on trivial, worthless things that actually bring no lasting satisfaction. Because the true satisfaction that the Christian has is in God's word. And we see this in so many places, so many areas, that God's children, Christians, are returning to God. We've seen it happen. The Bible is being read more.

Fellowship is being enjoyed more, even when we're doing so online. We are encouraging each other more through the means that God has given us, as he's blessed us with. God's given us this technology to share in fellowship, one with another, to engage in worship to God, one together, one with another.

And you think of the blessing that God is, God's word has given you. Even through these days, as we said, of constriction, restriction, affliction. I've never seen so many scriptural passages, for example, in social media, as I have in these last few days. And surely that in itself, again, should lift the heart of every Christian.

So we thank God for the mercy of his word. And we thank God too, for the mercy that he gives us in direct access to him in prayer. As we pour out, as you pour out your heart to God and all your need. [16:44] And again, you know, we see this happening in a world of so much peril. But this has brought, surely brought believers more and more to their knees. And even as we call upon God to be merciful to us, we call upon God to be merciful to the world in which we're living. We're reminded to pray to the Father of all mercies. And, you know, when we hear of the real need in so many different parts of the world, whether it's Niger, as Megan indicated just a few days ago in her email, the dreadful situation there, or in Italy, or in Spain, or America, or our own country, God is calling us to pray for these nations, to pray for the sick, to pray for the dying, to pray for our leaders, to pray for those in our health services, to pray for those in our health services, to pray for those in our health and that through these afflictions, that sinners will come to see the reality of eternity and turn to the Father of mercies, to turn to the God of all comfort. And so in our time of worship this morning, then, we truly do bless God for his being the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. And surely then it's a response to praise God for who he is in being our merciful God and the God of all comfort.

But Paul doesn't end there when he speaks of the God of mercies and the God of all comfort, because, well, we see how we're to show that comfort to others, as Paul tells us in verse 4, where we've to show that God-given comfort to others. We read there in verse 4 of God 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. You know, in many situations in life, when you've gone through a particular experience, perhaps even a very difficult experience, perhaps an illness or even a bereavement, then you're actually more able, more equipped to help others who are going through similar experiences. And in the Christian life, the life that's to be lived to the full, the Christian, the believer who knows the daily comfort of God, that comfort that caresses, the Christian caresses you through these times of difficulty and suffering. You are the more able to encourage others when they're experiencing similar afflictions. And when you can show the comfort that you know you've been given from God, when you can throw that assuring arm of love around others to surround them with the comfort of God that you yourself have known and do know. And it's especially during these dark days when you're witness to Christ and to his compassion. That opportunity is so real, it's so pertinent.

And I pray that you who know the God of all comfort, that you are ready and willing and actively involved in encouraging others and in bringing the word of the gospel to them. And to show the peace that you know in your heart that you can tell others off and that you can show them the love of Christ because you have been given and know that comfort that God gives you. And so I pray that as you know we've been considering these words this morning, then truly we will seek to obey what God has given us, to live out a life of faith in the good works that God has given us to exercise, to show to our neighbours.

So, you who are in Christ, be an encourager, be a comforter, be a witness to God who's blessed you in his adopting love and that you'll serve him with joy. We're speaking of the Lord Jesus as the light of the world, speaking to the children of that. Well, I pray that that light will shine through you, that you'll shine for the Lord Jesus in this dark world and that others will see the Saviour who dwells in your heart as you testify to the living Lord Jesus, to the one who came for you, who died for you, so that you might have everlasting life. So I pray that you will know that light in your life, that you will shine for him, that you'll testify to the reality of the God of mercies, the God of all comfort.

Let's join together in prayer. Let us pray. Lord, have mercy upon us, we who are sinners. Lord, be merciful. And we pray, Lord, that truly we will know the comfort you give us through your word, through the reality of the truth of the gospel, that comfort that tells us that all who come to you by faith are adopted into that eternal family, so that none are lost for whom the Lord Jesus gave his life. Lord, bless, we pray, this time of worship, this time of fellowship. Bless us, Lord, even as we join together in fellowship one with another.

[22 : 39] And Lord, help us truly to look to you as the Father of mercy, as the God of all comfort. Hear us, Lord, as we commit to this time to your care and keeping, as we commit our loved ones to your care and compassion. Bless us, Lord, we pray, and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.