

DOES ANYONE CARE? / Sunday, August 3, 2014

Unifying Topic: CONSOLATION GRANTED THROUGH PRAYER

Lesson Text

I. Sharing In The Suffering And Comfort Of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

II. Sharing In The Deliverance Of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:8-11)

The Main Thought: And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation (2 Corinthians 1:7, KJV).

Unifying Principle: In times of trouble communities may seek consolation and protection from some power or force beyond themselves. What consolation do Christians receive when seeking assistance from a higher power? Paul gave testimony of God's consolation in times of hardship and gave thanks for the mutual consolation that comes from praying for one another.

Lesson Aim: To convey to the students that Christians will suffer, but that suffering is not in vain.

Life Aim: To encourage students to face their trials with faith in God and use those experiences to provide consolation toward others during their times of suffering.

1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

1:6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

1:7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

1:8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

1:10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

1:11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

HISTORY:

Problems with worldliness, internal quarreling and doctrinal desertion from allegiance continue to fester in spite of Paul's efforts in the first epistle. And also opposition to Paul's ministry continues to mount.

(2ndCor.) 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:—Paul begins his letter stressing his apostleship in his greeting. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ— "Apostle" means that he has been called to be a messenger, an ambassador, a witness, a teacher, a missionary, a messenger of God. Some of the Corinthian believers were questioning and denying Paul's call by God when he said. ...by the will of God,— He had been chosen by God to work for God. His life work is not due to men; it's not even due to his own choice. It's due to God and God alone.

1.)God is to be the source of the believer's call. Paul calls Timothy "our brother" which means brother in Christ.

Timothy was a young man who had been led to the Lord at a very early age. Paul had sensed God's call upon Timothy's life, so Paul encouraged him to give his life to the ministry. **2.)God is the source of brotherhood among believers.** Timothy is with Paul in the district of Macedonia (probably the city of Philippi) while Paul is writing this letter to the Corinthians. ...**unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:**—

3.)God is the source of the church **4.)and the source of all saints.**

Paul is not only writing to the church at Corinth, but to all the other churches in Achaia. He knew that writing would help all the churches, so he wanted the letter to be circulated among all of them.

(2ndCor.) 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from...— For Paul, grace usually precedes peace. **5.) God is the source of grace and peace. Until one has not received the grace of God, he can know nothing of His peace.** Grace is the infinite love of God that enables Him to pour out infinite favor on the object loved, without receiving anything in return. ...**God**

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our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul links the Father and the Son thus affirming the deity of Christ. The reference is to the eternal Father and the Incarnate Son.

LESSON:

I. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 Sharing In The Suffering And Comfort Of Christ

1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;– Continuing in Paul's greeting or introduction of his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes it plain that 6.)God is the source; the Father of mercies 7.)and the source of all comfort. Paul can say that because of Jesus Christ! *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."* A father could show no greater mercy than to give the life of His Son to save others. This is exactly what God did. He gave Christ to die for His enemies; for those who were in rebellion against Him. God had mercy upon us, and He continues to have mercy upon us. His nature is that of a Father. The word "mercies" means compassion; pity. It means looking upon people in need and having concern and kindness upon them. The word "comfort" means to be by the side of another; to relieve and support; give solace, consolation, and encouragement. There is also the idea of strength, an enablement, and a confidence. It consoles and relieves a person, but it also strengthens him at the same time. It charges a person to go out and face the world saying blessed is God and thanks be to God!

1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. By God being the source of comfort, He knows how to comfort; relieve and support in all our tribulations. The word "tribulation" means to be weighed down exceedingly; to be pressed and crushed. And even in tribulation those who have been comforted by God will be able to comfort another in trouble. How? - By the comfort of God. We have to remember that God comforts us as well.

- God comforts the sufferer so that he might be a testimony to other sufferers.
- God carries us through trials so that we can carry others through trials.
- God strengthens us so that we can strengthen others.
- God encourages us so that we can encourage others.

Because you were comforted by God, you are able to comfort others during their times of tribulations.

1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. God matches the comfort to equal the sufferings. Christ bore every kind of suffering imaginable, even the suffering of death.

- being born to an unwed mother (Mt.1:18-19) • being born in a stable, the worst of conditions (Lk.2:7).
- being born to poor parents (Lk.2:24). • having his life threatened as a baby (Mt.2:13). • being the cause of unimaginable sorrow (Mt.2:16). • having to be moved and shifted as a baby (Mt.2:13).
- being reared in a despicable place, Nazareth (Lk.2:39). • having His father die during His youth (Mt.13:53-58).
- having no home, not even a place to lay His head (Mt.8:20; Lk.9:58). • being hated and opposed by religionists (Mk.14:1-2). • being charged with insanity (Mk.3:21). • being charged with demon possession (Mk.3:22). • being opposed by His own family (Mk.3:31-32). • being rejected, hated, and opposed by listeners (Mt.13:53-58; Lk.4:28-29). • being left alone, and forsaken by all of His friends (Mk.14:50). • being tried before the high court of the land on the charge of treason (Jh.18:33).
- being executed by crucifixion, the worst possible death (Jh.19:16).

What He went through enables us to know that we can also go through. Christ stooped to the lowest point of human experience in every condition. It is about His sufferings. He can now identify with and feel for any person's circumstance. When we suffer in the Will of God, we are sharing the sufferings of the Savior. This does not refer to the sufferings on the cross, for only Jesus could die as a sinless substitute for us. So, as the sufferings increase, so does the supply of God's grace. James 4:6a says, *"But He giveth more grace..."* It's like a river overflowing and overflowing with God's grace! God has ample grace for our every need, but He will not give it in advance. And we know that Paul went through many struggles: No matter how terrible it may be, God showers us with the comfort of His Son. He does not just give us some strength and comfort to bear the suffering, He gives us all the strength and comfort necessary to handle all the suffering.

1:6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. Whatever hardships Paul endured was for the sake of eternal salvation of his converts. It made for the encouragement of their salvation. One thing we have to remember is that we cannot save ourselves. It is by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus, but they needed encouragement, consolation (comfort) which was capable enough for them to endure the same sufferings Paul and others had suffered. So, the bottom line is: whether they are afflicted or whether they are comforted, it is for their comfort and salvation. It is for their good. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" Rom.8:28. God uses both suffering and comfort in a believer:

1. God uses suffering to stir comfort in others who suffer.
2. God uses suffering to stir salvation in others who need saving.

A person cannot trust God today and not trust Him tomorrow. A person cannot bless God when things are going well and curse God when things go bad. A person who truly believes in God trusts Him no matter the circumstance. He continues with God in the way of salvation no matter how great the suffering he has to bear.

God does not place suffering upon you, but He uses or He allows suffering. What glory would God get? For you see all suffering was placed upon Jesus at the cross. To 'share the pains of Christ' does not mean that His pains were not enough. It means that we suffer because we follow Him. It would be null and void for what Jesus has already done if we had to be afflicted for what Christ went through! Both the affliction and the comfort are for the same purposes.

1:7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. Our hope is that we try to spare the younger ones to avoid such sufferings, but we cannot, they need to experience the suffering so they can experience the comfort! Paul's hope was steadfast and enduring for them. We are all partakers of suffering and also partakers of comfort.

3. God uses suffering to stir endurance.
4. God uses suffering to stir sharing among believers.

You have nothing to share unless you go through something. *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord of one mind"* Phil.2:1-2.

II. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 Sharing In The Deliverance Of Christ

1:8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: Paul is talking about the afflictions that had come upon he and those with him. He does not want them to be ignorant of the trouble which came to them in Asia. They were oppressed (weighed down) exceedingly. They were crushed far beyond what they could stand, insomuch that they despaired even of life. They gave up; lost hope; didn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. Paul really broke it down to them. Paul, probably the greatest missionary of all times experience much suffering allowed by God time and time again. Why does God allow His dear servant to go through such sufferings?

5. God uses suffering to stir trust in Him for strength.

Note the intensity of Paul's trouble.

- Paul's life was threatened by a huge angry mob led by Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-40).
- Paul knew the trouble that awaited him in Asia (Acts 20:18-27)
- Paul says Priscilla and Aquilla... risked their lives for him (Rom.16:3-4)
- Paul says Andronicus and Junia...were his fellow prisoners (Rom.16:7)
- Paul expresses the great victory experienced through terrifying trials (1 Cor.4:9-13)
- Paul fought with beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor.15:32)
- Paul says he was crushed by some fearful burdens which made him despair of life itself (2 Cor.1:8-10)
- Paul expresses an extremely anxious mood while the memory of his days at Ephesus was still vivid (2 Cor.4:8-12).
- Paul lists his terrifying trials. Clement of Rome says....seven times in bonds (2 Cor.11:23-27)

Paul at some point while a prisoner in Rome experienced some sorrow so great that it threatened to crush him into a frightening despair (Phil.2:27).

1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:— Paul lets them know that his circumstances were due to external pressures and physical limitations reaching the point where the only way out, visible to them was death. Death was staring them in the face. They really couldn't trust in themselves to get out of these circumstances, but it had to be in the God who is able to raise the dead. It had to be in the God they put their trust in.

1:10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;— They had to put their trust in the God who delivers from so great a death! Hallelujah, have you ever been there?

6. God allows suffering to stir a daily trust in Him for deliverance.

Paul says: (1) Who delivered (past) (2) doth deliver (present) and (3) yet delivers (future). That's shouting news! God rescued them out of a terrible death! God preserved them from such a deadly peril! How? Because their hope was not in themselves, but in the God who raises the dead; who delivered; now delivers, and will deliver from death! I am excited! To trust God in such "*backed-up*" to the wall circumstances is to have astounding faith. Ask God, for He is able to give it to you. The challenges we go through may be small next to other's challenges, but they will all need faith to believe in the God who is able to raise the dead! God continued to deliver them through the trials of life and they continued to trust God to deliver them.

1:11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf. Paul lets them know that together they help when they pray for him and others. He needed their prayers then, and in the future. Why? - Because the gift bestowed; that is, the favor of blessings that God gives upon Paul would be received in being delivered from death—when people pray. It is God's underserved favor or divine answer to prayer. Many were able to give thanks on Paul's behalf because of their prayers.

7. God uses suffering to teach the purpose of prayer and thanksgiving for others.

Pray for pastors, teachers, missionaries, and others who are on the front lines of spreading the gospel. Anyone making a real difference for God will be challenged by Satan. When Satan sets a trap for God's people, he is really setting the trap for himself because God is going to get the glory out of any circumstance the devil sets. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* Rom.8:28.

SUMMARY:

¹Paul teaches why it is necessary for the Christian to pass through fiery trials and how Christ is always merciful to us (vv.3-4). There are some sufferings that we endure simply because we are human and subject to pain; but there are other sufferings that come because we are God's children and are serving Him (vv.5-6). The Corinthians were exposed to testings, not because they were especially wicked, but because tribulation is the portion of all believers and he knew they would be comforted by the Lord (v.7)

Paul goes on to state that their sufferings were so horrible and so unbearable that death seemed certain, but it made them trust more in God as He saved them from death(vv.8-10). He asks the Corinthians to pray for him (v.11). God has to work in us before He can work through us. In times of suffering, most of us are prone to think only of ourselves and to forget others. However, suffering can help us minister to others. Paul experienced trouble, not as punishment for something he had done but as preparation for something he was yet going to do in ministering to others in need.

APPLICATION:

This lesson spoke directly to me. *"The effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man/woman avail much!"* Those that care will pray for the sufferings of others and give comfort, will also receive the same because of the favor of God to give Him glory.

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/comfort-in-suffering/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sndayschool.html>