

# “Love One Another Through Your Pain”

## 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

We’ve been going through the letter of Jude the last three Sundays and expanding on some of the issues Jude mentions in our Bible studies on Wednesdays. Someone asked a good question on one of our Wednesday nights regarding false teachers and false teaching? Is false teaching a sign that one is unsaved? Jude points out that false teachers deny our only sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ. These sneak in intentionally to cause confusion in Jesus’ church. They are unbelievers.

However, Christians (those who know Jesus as Lord) are sometimes guilty of teaching things that are not true according to the Bible. We can sometimes twist the bible into saying what we want it to say or out of our own biblical immaturity we over-react when we read one verse and all of a sudden build a wrong theology out of it.

One of the most damaging wrong teachings that some Christians (and false teachers love to use too) fall for is the idea that God our loving Father would never let anything bad happen to His people. That we’re supposed to be healthy and that nothing tragic should happen to us and if it does its our own fault because of unconfessed sin in our life.

That false teaching portrays God as somewhat vindictive. Causing calamities to come into our life because we’re not listening to Him like we should. And He can do this to get our attention, but even if He does He can redeem it. Jesus said in Matt. 5:45

*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

In the everyday events of life good and bad can happen to anyone because we live in a sin-affected world. One time Jesus was asked about a tragedy that happened when a tower fell and killed 18 people in Galilee. Jesus stated in Luke 13:4,

*Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? [because that’s how some believers erroneously think] <sup>5</sup> I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

He confronted their false ideas that those 18 were ‘more guilty’ of sin than others. Jesus said, everyone’s a sinner so if a tragedy happens somewhere and it doesn’t happen to you, make sure you’re right with God.

But here’s where pain and suffering changes for the believer. When it happens to us as followers of Christ, our loving Father does not waste it. He’ll redeem it and repurpose it for our maturing, His glory and helps us love one another through our pain. God wants to use the difficulties that can happen to all of us to teach us that He is a compassionate Father, not a harsh one. Let’s see how this works in 2 Cor. 1:1-11.

As Paul opens his second letter to the Corinthians he praises God in a way that perhaps we’re not comfortable with or, unwilling to do.

<sup>3</sup> *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,*  
<sup>4</sup> *who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

Notice the false teaching that God is harsh was not something Paul taught. “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.*” Who spares us from all trouble? No! who comforts us in all our troubles. Troubles that we might bring on ourselves but also troubles that God allows to happen to us. “All our troubles” assumes we (God’s children) will all have troubles. Jesus said the same thing in John 16:33,

<sup>33</sup> *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

By the way, what did Jesus just tell them?

<sup>32</sup> *“But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.*

That doesn’t sound encouraging. See, God and Jesus tell us we will have troubles in life but we can and will be comforted by God and Jesus. And when we are then

## **We Can Comfort Others in their Pain Because God Has Comforted Us in Ours (1:3-5)**

God knows everything that goes on in and around our lives. He is full of compassion and when we pray and cry out to Him for relief, He brings it through His word, He reduces our anxiety level and His peace transcends our understanding. In other words, humanly speaking, asking an unseen God for help doesn’t make sense. But it does when exercised in faith. That peace and comfort comes

### ***If we’re thankful to God for His comfort (v.3)***

We won’t receive His comfort if we’re angry or disappointed at Him for our trials.

<sup>3</sup> *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,*

“Praise” is also translated ‘bless’ and means to speak well of. We get the word eulogy from this. So let’s get this straight: Paul is praising, speaking well of God for the comfort that God will provide (when we go to Him) in any trial and difficulty that comes upon us. We give God thanks because He doesn’t leave us on our own. We go to Him because He’s the only one who can provide true peace. Listen to those familiar words in Phil. 4:6-7,

<sup>6</sup> *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* <sup>7</sup> *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

“With thanksgiving”. Thanksgiving for the trials? No, thanksgiving in the trials because you’ve come to the right person by faith.

<sup>16</sup> *Be joyful always;* <sup>17</sup> *pray continually;* <sup>18</sup> *give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*

“In all circumstances”; while they are happening. These passages presume believers will have difficulties. Show our faith in God by speaking well of Him, to Him, so we can experience His comfort as needed, but there’s more. God doesn’t waste your pain. We receive comfort,

#### ***When we use our difficulties to comfort others (v.4)***

*<sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

Have you ever wondered or asked God ‘Why did this happen to me?’ Here’s one direct answer: so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. Maybe you’re thinking, ‘That’s not the answer I wanted.’ I want to know why this happened to me?’ And in that answer, God is trying to remind us life is not about you and me. It’s about God being glorified through us. So when He allows difficulties to come into our life, He’s trusting us to go to Him for comfort and equipping us to be mature enough to now use it to comfort others in their difficulties. That’s one of the ways God comforts us is through each other when we share our painful and difficult experiences. Why does that work? Why can we receive comfort from God in prayer and trust and be comforted by our comforting others?

#### ***Because our source of comfort is unlimited (v.6)***

Paul says the reason why we are comforted by God in our difficulties is because Christ’s sufferings are ours in abundance. In other words, because God allowed Jesus to suffer immeasurably more than us and was with Him in that and rescued Him through the resurrection – and we will never suffer to the extent Jesus did – God’s comfort and compassion and mercies will never run out on us no matter what kind of suffering we face.

*<sup>5</sup> For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*

And we can pass that along to others as we comfort them through our own experience of God’s comfort or at least share with them the truths that God comes alongside them in any difficulty they may be going through.

The main point Paul is trying to show us is that as we grow and mature in trusting God with our trials we ...

### **Learn that Our Suffering is Not Only About Us** **(vv.6-7)**

Look at what Paul learned about how his own difficulties were used by God to help him minister to others:

*<sup>6</sup> If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

Here’s another answer to the question ‘Why do Christians suffer difficulties in life?’ So God can use us to com-fort one another. But, we have to learn that as we mature and grow in our salvation. When Paul says it is for your comfort and salvation, he’s not talking about getting us saved – since

he's already talking to believers. He's talking about our spiritual growth in our salvation. The trials we experience,

### ***Produce spiritual endurance (v.6)***

In God's economy, nothing is wasted when we learn and grow and see how His sovereign hand allows us to mature through our difficulties, receiving His Spiritual comfort as we grow so that we can help each other grow in our salvation. The key words here are "*which produces in you patient endurance*". That word produce means 'accomplish the purpose of'. But see how our spiritual endurance helps us mature so that the next time we experience difficulty we will not cry out to God like immature children 'Why is this happening to me?' without faith, instead cry out to God 'Lord, give me strength to handle this because I know you are maturing me so that I can help others in their difficulties for the purpose of

### ***Deepening each other's faith (v.7)***

'Our hope is for you' Paul says that you will also share in our sufferings but also in our comfort. That word share is *koinonia*, fellowship. Only Christians share together in trials and in comfort because non-Christians don't get it. The only way a non-Christian's pain and suffering will benefit them is if they find God through them. And God does save many people in that manner.

When we understand this, Paul says, our hope is firming up. We are learning endurance. We are growing. We can help each other in whatever difficulties we experience not because we are so mature but rather are rich in the Father's never-ending supply of comfort and mercies. And by the way, here's another false teaching I hear believers in Jesus spreading. And that is that God is a god of war in the Old Testament and a God of love and mercy in the New Testament. This is from Ex. 34 when God in His grace gave Moses a second copy of the 10 commandments and said to Moses

*<sup>5</sup> Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. <sup>6</sup> And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."*

God doesn't always deal with sin in the same season. He gives people time to repent. Moses interceded to God numerous times to spare Israel from judgment and God listened often to Moses.

Now that we understand that everybody experiences difficulties in life, believers alone have the divine resources through faith in Jesus to 1) patiently endure in them; 2) receive God's comforting presence from His Spirit who dwells in us and 3) can now use their own experience to minister to others. And Paul illustrates how this works in vv.8-11.

## **Look Back at How God Rescued You** **(vv.8-11)**

Paul tells the Corinthians how he had to trust God in a recent difficulty:

*<sup>8</sup> We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, in our*

*hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.*

Scholars are unclear about what event Paul is referring to, possibly the riot in Ephesus in Acts 19. Or, as he wrote Philippians while in jail, he didn't know whether he would live or die. Perhaps neither for this case Paul clearly thought he was going to die by Romans decree (sentence of death). He had no resources other than pray and trust God to deliver, and He did. So Paul's illustration invites us to do the same. Looking back on your life, how did God rescue you from a situation

### ***That caused you to trust Him alone (vv.8-9)***

Paul and his companions saw no way out except through the miraculous intervention of God. And God delivered! Praise the Lord. Perhaps we did not have that drastic of an experience but we've all had difficulties in our life where we had no resources to draw on of our own. All we could do was pray. What did we learn from that? How did we grow from that? How did we glorify God through that? See, when we are in difficulty, we ask for prayer. Why do we ask others to pray? Another popular false teaching that Christians share is that the more people who pray means the greater chance God will answer. Do we really believe God sits up there with a prayer meter – you know like one of those noise meters at a sports event – waiting for it to get past a certain point, and then He turns to the angels, 'Okay, they've got enough now. Go solve that problem. Go heal that cancer. Go provide that money or food.' That's how pagans worship their gods by increasing the sacrifices and noise and action.

*Matt. 6: 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

We ask many to pray so that they will

### ***Glorify God with us (vv.10-11)***

*<sup>10</sup> He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, <sup>11</sup> as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

We want more people to pray, not because God will hear because of our many words, but so that all of those who pray will give thanks to God for answering. If prayer were answered because of sheer volume of people, then we make prayer about us, not God. As if we can manipulate God to do what we want.

If we're willing to be honest and listen to what Paul is saying here, we can look back at our difficulties, trials, problems and even tragedies, and see over time how God used them to mature us in our faith, for opportunities to talk about God in our difficulties and to share with other believers who were going through their own difficulties how God was with us, comforted us and got us through that situation.

*<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,*

*<sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*

Today is father's day and we want to make sure we all have a healthy, biblical perspective of our heavenly Father. If we don't we will get discouraged and confused because we have a false

understanding of God. He is for us not against us. Even if you're here this morning and you don't know Him this way. That you've never heard what the Bible clearly says about how God loves us and is not willing that any should perish but that all of us come to repentance. Telling God that you aren't worthy to receive His comfort and forgiveness because you're a sinner. And God knows that, but He has to hear you say it and believe that God's plan to send Jesus to die for your sins includes your sins. Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, Master of the world and your life; and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead. If you do that today, you can now call Him, your father.

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